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Traveling eye: the elusive digital frame and the elasticity of time in art

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Abstract

In this article, I will consider my video installations, *Hold* (2006), *An Occulting Light* (2007) and *Lighter/Darker* (2008), in which I have developed a language of re-filmed frames and expanded moving image spaces, in the light of Victor Burgin's idea of the 'remembered film', Benjamin's 'unconscious optics' and Deleuze's work on painting and cinema.

These works were constructed from fragments of 'remembered films', including *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (Mankiewicz 1947) and *The Cruel Sea* (Freud 1953), combined with footage from actual journeys made to sites of family memory. Using re-filming techniques, alterations to frame rate and speed and experimental editing, I have begun to explore 'affect' in the spaces between frames in digital video where the image exceeds the original frame boundaries, oscillating between visible traces inscribed in the newly constructed sequences. My project in this practice-led research is to gain insights into 'affect' in relation to our perceptions as artists and spectators of movement and of the traces of time passing in paintings and film works, through the languages of the moving image.

Keywords

video installation

digital frames

affect

painting

perception

temporality

'We are still very much annoyed with out of date notions of time. Please would you throw away your watches!'

(Tinguely 1996: 405)

the film *we* saw is never the one that *I* remember ... ’

Burgin 2004: 110)

Memory, I hate you!!’

Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 168)

Why should we hate memory? Why in particular, should artists hate memory? In the 1970s, one of my favorite records was a live album by Joni Mitchell (Mitchell 1974). At one point, between songs, members of the audience shout out requests – Carey! Blue! and Joni says: ‘You know, a painter does a painting and he does a painting – no-one ever says to him, no-one ever said to Van Gogh, “Paint a Starry Night again man!” ’ The crowd laughs. This line has been with me all my working life as an artist. It is firmly embedded in my memory. Artaud, writing about Van Gogh in the 1940s, says: ‘The marvelous thing is that this painter who was only a painter [...] is also the one who makes us forget that we are dealing with painting’ (Artaud 1965: 154). Memory *and* forgetting ... we *can* throw away our watches because in art, time is elastic: in the act of making and the space of looking. Our encounters with art take place in the expanded space of the here and now.

As artist or spectator, we may be *moved* by a work, or by working; we may feel that we are changed in the moment, that time has slipped or been suspended, that we are in some way positioned outside of time. This research draws on my own studio practice in order to engage with these ‘subjective’ experiences of time passing or ‘expanded moments’. I am seeking to gain insight into the notion of ‘affect’ in *painterly* paint surfaces, formed through temporal slippage, leaving traces of time and *movement*, by experimenting with film and video processes, the languages and apparatus of the moving image.

This article focuses on a series of experiments made in this practice-led research context. I discuss three video installation works: *Hold* (2006), *An Occulting Light* (2007) and *Lighter/Darker* (2008). Insights derived from the experience of making these works are brought together here with a series of theoretical engagements: with Victor Burgin’s work on ‘the remembered film’ (Burgin 2004), Benjamin’s ‘unconscious optics’ (Benjamin 1970: 230) and Deleuze’s work on painting in *The*

Logic of Sensation (Deleuze 2003) and on the ‘time-image’ in film in *Cinema 2* (Deleuze 2005). All of the works under consideration were constructed through experiments with re-filming to work with the space between the ‘frames’ of digital video sequences. Using these experiments, I will look at ‘affect’ in the connections between experimental moving image works and painting.

We know that film is a time-based medium. If we work with film or video, we must impose the marks of measured ‘clock-time’: time-codes and distances on to the inner consciousness of continuous time that philosopher Henri Bergson terms ‘durée’ as he explores our conscious experience of living in time and the difficulties of measuring the time of the imagination (Bergson 2002). Yet, painting too is ‘time-based’. It has to operate in what Beckett called ‘[...] that double headed monster of damnation and salvation’ (Beckett 1965: 11). Bergson writes about ‘the metaphysic immanent in the spatial representation of time’ (Bergson 1999: 216) and my investigation is a kind of mapping *in media res* to apprehend the phenomenon of temporal palimpsest in painterly surfaces. Considering the painterly surface as a ‘spatial representation of time’, I am looking at how the ‘affects’ of painting operate with respect to movement and temporality, taking ‘affects’ to mean the kind of intense and dynamic responses to art works that go beyond representation and conventional semiotics.

In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari propose the work of art as a ‘bloc of sensations’. They further propose that ‘those who are nothing but painters are more than painters’ and place before us ‘not the resemblance but the pure sensation’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 164–67). How does this kind of ‘sensation’ relate to time and memory? How is it connected to the ways in which we are *moved* by art? Painters work with translation: through mobile looking, physical activity, gesture, material and transformative action as they look and move in space. A painting may stop the viewer in their tracks. Painting is experimental: it generates paint surfaces out of inner vision or reflected light, the hand-eye-material dynamic embedding time in the work. The so-called ‘painterly’ surface is not a frozen instant or even a series of frozen instants, but a space that has its own dynamism. Varied qualities of paint – thicker, thinner, edges, flat areas and so on – may create

perceptual movement, with layers of paint having time embodied in them, recording or holding the memory of past movements. So, is this space still or moving? Why do we refer to an emotional response as ‘moving’ when we mean that it creates ‘affect’? Perhaps we are moved by the temporal dimension inside a painting’s dialogic surface, constructed through hand–eye connection, materiality and gesture, that is through *movement*.

I would like to frame this body of practice-led research as a set of ‘encounters’: with the processes and materials of video and painting in studio practice, with paintings, with experimental film works and with theory. These encounters offer some insights into the connections between perception and emotional affect in art as well as raising further questions. The research initially emerged out of some key experiences of making and looking at art:

1. Finding myself in an apparently ‘altered state’ of consciousness, a kind of ‘outside of time’ sensation, accompanied by heightened visibility, after prolonged and intense periods of painting in the studio, working from slides of video freeze frames
 2. Experiencing moments where time seemed to glitch, jump or even stand still, as a spectator of painting. This has happened to me a number of times, but I am especially aware of one instance in Tate Britain, looking at Frank Auerbach’s picture: *To the Studios, 1979–80* (Auerbach 1980) a work where the surface is ‘painterly’
 3. Being particularly engaged by certain re-filmed frames, extracted from video sequences as part of my studio working process, where there was visible slippage between the digital video frames. This made me reflect on the relationship between the immediately apparent visual qualities of these frames and the practice of painting (see Figure 1 for example)
 4. Engaging with experimental films and expanded cinema spaces where the works emerge from the processes of their own making and which foreground the materiality of time in film and the importance of reflexivity the spaces of reception, for example, William Raban’s *Broadwalk* (1972).
- Taken together, these experiences led me to investigate the affects of ‘painterly’ surfaces in the light of cinematic practices and perceptions. One set of findings from the studio experimentation

has been derived from ‘re-filming’ processes, that is, running a film or video on a DVD player, film projector or VCR and using a camera (still, film or digital video) to shoot sequences from the screen and subsequently using digital editing technology to capture frames from the footage. Following on from this process, frames and sequences have been reconstructed to make installation works. For the main works in this article, unless otherwise stated, ‘re-filming’ refers to digital video processes. A range of ‘re-filming’ processes have been used in art practice, either simply setting up a screen and camera or by making use of specific technical arrangements, such as closed circuits in analogue video, ‘optically’ printing 35mm, 16mm and Super 8 film frames or making ‘hybrid’ works incorporating elements of film *and* video. There are many examples from the history of experimental film and expanded cinema. In *Broadwalk* (Raban 1972), the film-maker records patterns of movement in a London park using time lapse and shutter experiments and then makes use of re-filming to expose the frame-by-frame processes. The materiality of film as it records time is important in this work and its reflexivity is characteristic of experimental films by Raban, Le Grice and others influenced by Peter Gidal’s theories of ‘structural materialist’ film (Gidal 1989). In digital video, the *frame* as such is a simulation or construct and does not really exist. Whereas the *film* frame has a material form, the *video* frame is composed of two electronically captured fields made up of scan lines that have been digitally encoded. With re-filming, the process of ‘looking’ with another lens seems to capture the space *between* these imaginary frames and to capture movement. There is a sense of moving in and out of the image, of it not being absolutely still; there may also be a form of uncanny doubling (see Figure 1). What is revealed in this space for the viewer is a range of distortions: the seeing that is not stored in the time of the frame, that has slippage as well as motion and that seems to transcend the original frame boundary. These image distortions have an emotional affect which, in turn, alters our perception of the elasticity of time when we encounter them.

Visually, this suggests ‘painterly’ seeing – the kinds of translation made by the painter into mark-making. In his work on the future of the image, Jacques Rancière, referring to the alterations that take place in artworks, points to:

the interplay of operations that produces what we call art: or precisely an alteration of resemblance. This alteration can take a myriad of forms. It might be the visibility given to brush-strokes that are superfluous when it comes to revealing who is represented [...] (Rancière 2007: 7)

We may consider the ‘alterations’ such as layering and brushwork as traces of movement in time and compare these to the visible traces formed by moving image experiments; perhaps also considering whether painting affects or moves us because it embodies time in the layering of the surface: in the materiality of paint and quality of mark. Frank Auerbach’s cityscapes provide a good example of these kinds of effects.

In a piece of moving image art, frames are like building blocks of time and space that have been used to construct the work and that reconstruct our experience of looking. As single photographic images, they are paradoxically indexical and fleeting, simultaneously recording all of the detail available to the lens whilst the shutter is open and yet rapidly moving on to the next instant. We may consider how the frame is constituted as a phenomenon within the visual field, how it engages with memory and sensation. I will go on here to describe some video experiments that have opened up the conceptual space between digital ‘frames’ as a way of thinking about affect and time.

Hold (2007)

Some years ago, I began to make a work about the sea. By connecting the ‘time codes’ of the moving image and the measurement of time at sea, the crossing of time zones and the possibility of time madness, I hoped to explore how time in the work of art becomes magical, extended, elastic, subjective, ‘time outside time’, analogous with time on board ship, the ship being the ‘other space’ the ‘heterotopia par excellence’ (Foucault 1989: 236). There were personal resonances in this work. My father, who died when I was young, was a sailor from a long line of sailors and I had a half

brother who was lost at sea. As the work developed, I found I was drawing more and more on childhood memories and inner vision.

Making the video work *Hold*, which began with filming around the coast, I was haunted by the memory of a film I had seen as a child, *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (Mankiewicz 1947) starring Rex Harrison and Gene Tierney. The film tells the story of a woman at the turn of the twentieth century who is widowed with a small daughter, goes to live in a house by the sea, and falls in love with its previous occupant, the ghost of a sea captain; eventually writing a book based on his stories. I began to work with short sections of the film that I remembered, using re-filming techniques, experiments with speed, shutter, frame rate and editing. The work takes the form of a two-screen projection with the video sequences from *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* extremely slowed down on the left-hand screen and with still images on the right, derived from video footage recorded on journeys through various landscapes/cityscapes in Cornwall, Scotland and London related to family and childhood memories (see Figure 2).

The visible slippage in the moving images on the left-hand screen seems to reveal subjective memory traces inscribed in the frames, as if the working process of re-filming from the screen has created this effect. These sequences include a section running through the entire piece, and altered in different ways, where a woman in an Edwardian bathing costume (the main character, Mrs Muir, played by Gene Tierney) is using a length of rope to pull herself in from the sea to an old-fashioned bathing hut. She stops to wave at someone, apparently on the seashore. There is also an altered section of the film showing a little girl running into the bathing hut and other children playing on the beach. In the original film, these sequences last for a very few seconds each.

The right-hand 'still' images seem to reveal the spaces between frames, taking on what may be thought of as a 'painterly' appearance, showing visible tracks of movement. This working process, using both the slow re-filmed material and the extracted stills entailed painstaking selection and seemed like peering directly into the luminous images of memory.

Having begun to work in this way, I encountered Victor Burgin's work *The Remembered Film* (Burgin 2004). Burgin writes about the fragments of cinematic image that emerge into our waking consciousness spontaneously, unbidden. These images take the form of involuntary associations relating to personal desire. He develops the idea of 'the sequence-image' as a conceptual device to describe this kind of film fragment, the brilliant memory image which is often little more than a still, and goes on to examine its possible significance.

The elements that constitute the sequence-image, mainly perceptions and recollections, emerge successively but not teleologically. The order in which they appear is insignificant (as in a rebus) and they present a configuration – 'lexical, sporadic' – that is more 'object' than narrative. What distinguishes the elements of such a configuration from their evanescent neighbours is that they seem somehow more 'brilliant'. In a psychoanalytic perspective, this suggests that they have been attracted into the orbit of unconscious signifiers, and that it is from the displaced affect associated with the latter that the former derive their intensity. (Burgin 2004: 21)

The sections of *Mrs Muir* used in *Hold* are 'sequence-images' from a 'remembered film', which have these kinds of associations. There is much to say of this 'sequence-image'. The woman undeniably reminds me of my mother, although I was not conscious of that at the time of working, and the rope seems umbilical, a cord connecting the spectator with spaces of memory. *Mrs Muir* is a film that my parents would have seen together around the time of their marriage in 1947. The film story has personal resonance, my mother having married a man 25 years older than herself, a sailor, a weather-beaten teller of romantic tales who seemed to offer excitement but was almost bound to become a ghostly presence in her life. Perhaps this was my mother's romantic vision. I saw the film on TV as a child, almost certainly accompanied by some sort of commentary from my mother, amongst whose favourite films it was, or so I choose to remember. *Mrs Muir* deals with memory, death, dislocation and desire and hauntings. When the main character dies peacefully at the end of the film, a glass falls from her hand, and the ghostly sea captain pulls her younger self forward into the afterlife; images follow of a clock shaking in a storm, the woman waving and the rope, the

bathing hut and the little girl. Through visual alterations, the ‘sequence-images’ used in my work resonate with some of the film’s themes. As Burgin says: ‘[...] a chance encounter with an image may give rise to an inexplicable feeling [...]’ (Burgin 2004: 61).

In *Hold*, memory fragments are transformed into sensation through working with cinematic processes, where *time* is altered for the spectator. Building on Henri Bergson’s work *Matière et Mémoire/Matter and Memory* (2002), Mary Ann Doane writes ‘[...] the human experience of perception pivots on a temporal lag, a superimposition of images, an inextricability of past and present’ and reminds us that Bergson saw this experience of ‘non-linear temporality’ as ‘the mark of human subjectivity par excellence’ (Doane 2002: 76). In the context of my research, Doane’s discussion was important in more fully understanding the visible effect emerging from how re-filming ‘catches’ spaces between frames. This effect is accidental, random, but these ‘accidents’ seem to me to create a new, productive space in making work.

The working process in each of these video works, in turn, has contributed to my understanding of the indexical process of light creating a single frame and of how traces of movement and time caught in the frame may relate to affect. I have found for example that extreme slowness of movement may create unsettling effects for the spectator because of the distortions in the resulting image that have come about through visible slippage in the frames. For the spectator, the experience of encountering these effects may be described as ‘haptic’, understanding ‘haptic’ as the way in which, in certain viewing situations: ‘[...] the eyes themselves function like organs of touch’ (Marks 2000: 162). This could arguably relate to the way we are affected or ‘moved’ by the translation of what is seen by the painter made through the painterly gesture, through movement. The frame spaces made through re-filming reveal visible traces of slippage that seem to emanate motion, so although made ‘photographically’, they are perhaps closer to painting. John Berger suggests that ‘If a painting “stops” time, it is not, like a photograph, preserving a moment of the past from the supersession of succeeding moments’ (Berger 1985: 205), thus implying that painting stores and later represents successive moments of time.

An Occulting Light (2007)

This video work (see Figure 3) consists of seven sequences on a 15-minute loop shown on two screens. The sequences that made up this projected installation work are really a series of very short fragments from the British war film *The Cruel Sea* (Frend 1953) where the battleship has been hit and the sailors are forced to bail out by jumping overboard. The sequences show water crashing through a cabin wall on to a bunk, sailors climbing a ladder to a higher deck, conflict between two of the men below decks, floating in the sea. The fragments have been captured by videoing from a television screen where a copy of the film is playing, using a digital video camera and subsequently extracting frames from the resulting footage using a digital editing programme.

My work with re-filming led me to look at Walter Benjamin's concept of 'unconscious optics'.

Benjamin considers the painter as magician and the cameraman as surgeon, and develops the idea that the operations of the camera introduce us to 'unconscious optics' as a kind of parallel to processes in psychoanalysis. He says for example that:

the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations [...] its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulse. (Benjamin 1970: 230)

He adds: 'slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding supernatural motions [...]' (Benjamin 1970: 230)

These ideas from Benjamin illuminated aspects of my work *An Occulting Light* (2007). In this work, I found that my experiments with re-filming and slowing down made visible aspects of movement and distortions of form within the frame spaces, which were imperceptible at regular speed and yet which now became rather disturbing in their affect. Rosalind Krauss, reflecting on Benjamin, compares the '[...] hitherto unseen visual data' revealed by the camera to 'parapraxes', 'those slips of tongue or pen' (Krauss 1993: 178) that allow us to engage with the unconscious. This raised questions for me about the significance of the perception of movement and traces of

movement in art works. With slow motion, there are a number of factors in play; the defamiliarization and the transformation of perception it creates allows subjective associations. For example in the sequence where the sailors' heads turn in the water, they become visually transformed (see Figure 4). This effect is reminiscent of Francis Bacon's heads painted in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, *Three Studies for a Portrait of George Dyer* (Bacon 1963) and *Study for Three Heads* (Bacon 1962). In these paintings, Bacon's stated aim of making pictures '[...] to look as if a human being had passed between them, like a snail, leaving a trace of the human presence and memory trace of past events as a snail leaves its slime' (Hunter in Gale 2008: 26) seems all too evident; the paint suggests viscera, there are 'memento mori' in the brush trails, scraped across time, broken and decaying. Does the manipulation of film and video time offer a similar insight into the 'haptic' viewing experience? In our encounters with paintings, we are 'moved' as a result of that which has moved through time. As spectators, we are placed outside of time as we grasp the residue of movement in matter.

At the time of working on *An Occulting Light*, I was also making a series of repetitive paintings, working from a single photograph of my half brother Alf, who was lost at sea before I was born. As with *Hold*, this was obviously a work that had much personal resonance, and the more direct material engagement with matter and surface enabled me to reflect on the nature of 'slippage' in the paint surface and on the temporal experience of making the paintings, in a parallel engagement with the video pieces. In both video and painting work, some form of 'slippage' is created either through manipulating frames or through the dialogic layered and scraped paint surface, which foregrounds the subjectivity of our experience of time. Both the altered sequences and paintings become emotionally moving for the spectator through temporal manipulation. As a further dimension, the soundtrack for *An Occulting Light* consists of 'remembered songs', including *Danny Boy* and *Abide With Me*, songs that I remember my father singing. These are also slowed down, as a way of beginning to explore the emotional affect of altering the time base for the perception of language as it is sung, in a parallel idea to that of focusing on 'image-sequences' from the 'remembered film.'

***Lighter Darker* (2008)**

Lighter Darker (2008) is a five-screen site-specific work (Figure 5) that was made for the domed space of the Planetarium at World Museum, Liverpool in 2008. The piece was inspired by the idea of telescopes bringing the faraway near and looking back through time at the stars, thus allowing a kind of time travel for the spectator. The work relates to both the function and conceptual resonance of the telescope, or spyglass developed at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Galileo. A solitary rower orbits the dome, progressing across the star-filled universe, momentarily lost, navigating filmed frames, telescopic visions and painted seas. On the soundtrack, a ship's bell tolls, resonant in the dome, but here, time is elastic and the boat provides another form of magic, a 'traveling eye' (Barthes 1973).

The piece consists of seven moving image sequences of the rower, constructed using different manipulations of the frame, and arranged so that there is movement outside of the frame across the dome, as the sequences are arranged in orbits, with the central figure constantly circling, apparently lost and trying to navigate. Between orbits, where we see only the night sky, there are images of the boat, the rower and the night sky shot on video and Super 8 using a telescope that are flashed at different points on to the dome, lasting only two or three frames each.¹

Al looking is looking backwards in time and is dependent on light and reflection. The processes of seeing and painting are central to this work. In its use of the rower in the sequence, the work picks up on star gazing, time measurements and navigation at sea. The water which is moved through gesture creates some of the timing and movement for the piece. The small rowing boat is perhaps the simplest way to travel across water, and, like painting, involves gesture and material – pushing the water behind you – backwards into the past to move forward. I made the work by taking a number of basic sequences of a man rowing across the 'screen' space and translating them through re-filming and editing.

¹ A short extract from *Lighter Darker* as shown at the World Museum Liverpool in 2008 is available on Youtube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8IXEAY_8Zo&feature=related.

Two of the sequences were made using paintings made from the original film frames which were then filmed on a rostrum. Two were made using Super 8 film and extreme slow motion. The others are experiments with re-filming, distance, exposure, shutter speeds and using telescope lenses as part of the filming process. The ‘painted’ frames were made by working on top of one frame image with oil paint whilst looking at the frame ahead; an experiment intended to embed the passage of time in each painting. The painted material interrupts the sequence randomly but builds up towards the end of this video sequence by which point each consecutive frame is painted.

In the orbiting sequence, we see the stars in the night sky punctuated by flash frames from the altered sequences, including extreme close ups, light through the telescope, altered colour and Super 8 frames. These flash ‘frames’ draw attention to the perceptual effect of after-image.

Reassembled in time, the rower moves again across the screen – and across the dome of the night sky. Working in the Planetarium, I was conscious that the domed space used here to understand the night sky had resonances across many centuries, because of the association with the architecture of spiritual spaces.

In *Lighter Darker*, time is explored spatially. The processes of constructing the work in the space relate to experimental film practices and explorations of space in expanded cinema, although not working in the same way with the materiality of film as for instance Raban or Le Grice. The viewer is placed inside the installation and may experience some disorientation during the flash sequences in particular. Whilst installing the piece, I considered the spectator positioning inside the time and motion of the screens in the light of Deleuze’s work in *Cinema 2: the time image*. Following Bergson’s discussion of subjective time, Deleuze proposes the idea of the ‘time crystal’: ‘[...] a small internal circuit between a present and its own past: an *oscillation* ...’ (Deleuze 2005: 78) According to Deleuze, we see non-chronological time in the ‘time crystal’. The crystal always lives at the limit, not past, present or future but an oscillation, a bit of time in the pure state. This resonates with the kind of encounters I have had with experimental film where the spectator is intentionally engaged in an active position through the work’s spatial arrangements and reflexivity

and I attempted to work with this idea of expanded time in the site-specific spatial arrangements of the screen in *Lighter Darker*. The encounter with Deleuze's work on cinema and painting has been helpful in thinking about other aspects of my research. Firstly, it has been useful in considering the affect of slippage between digital frames, the tension between movement and stillness, where there is often a flicker effect, or constant exchange of two images. Secondly, to return to painting, Deleuze sheds light on the 'sensation' of being in expanded time when looking at painterly surfaces made across time through gesture.

On Painting

Painting directly attempts to release the presences beneath representation, beyond representation. The color system itself is a system of direct action on the nervous system [...]
Painting gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs (the painting breathes...)
(Deleuze 2003: 52)

Painting, in other words, is visceral, of the body. Deleuze is writing about the paintings of Francis Bacon, but also about painting as a phenomenon, a force in the world. Bacon has been described as having a 'Bergsonian horror of the static [...]' (Hunter in Gale 2008: 32) and the images derived from my moving image experiments *resemble* Bacon's heads. I have attempted to find out whether this *resemblance* has any significance beyond the immediately apparent visual effects by reflecting on my working processes. The traces created by film and video processes result from movement, as do the materialized marks of painterly painting. The spectator connects with the time spent by the painter in making the work by spending time looking. Time spent looking is often what makes a picture 'work' to have 'life' beyond representation or technical skill. There are physical acts involved on both sides to apprehend the sensations of life in motion, life lived in time. My experimental work with the devices and apparatus of the moving image therefore suggests that the visible traces of movement and mobile looking affect us.

All paintings have periods of time and labour embedded in them. Rodin famously pointed out that, as time never completely stands still, the painting is actually better at making pictures than the

photograph, if we look long enough. Merleau Ponty describes in the work of Cézanne: ‘the sense an emerging order, of [...] an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes [...]’ (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 282). From this practice-led research using video, I have found a connection between the practices of *painterly* painting and experimental/expanded cinema in terms of the perceived elasticity time in an experimental visionary space away from regular clock-time. By *painterly*, I mean surfaces that are layered, complex, formed in a multiplicity of mark making and not concealing the marks of brush or other tools used in making the work. The painterly paintings I am engaged with *move* me; my sense of being in the world seems to tilt at an angle. The surface affects my sense of time. I am offered respite from clock-time. The stuff of paint, the sensual matter, is also in motion, spread thick, stretched thin, in broken tones or smooth delineations making space, generating energy through the dynamism of colour, making time for eyes and leaving us stammering on the threshold of perceptions.

The connection between painterly surfaces and certain types of experimental film and video emerged from my own perceptions of temporality being affected by handling film and video through various technologies over a number of years in my practice. As mentioned, I have also experienced the indexicality and reflexivity of film as recording medium used by experimental filmmakers working in the ‘structuralist’ and ‘structural materialist’ mode, where individual works have been constructed as documents of their own making, in the way that paintings are, as in Raban’s *Diagonal* (1973), a three-screen work that derives its formal structure and mode of viewing from the process of filming the projector gate itself.

Reflections

Every object, if it is art, is charged with the rush of time even though it is static, but all this depends on the viewer. (Smithson 1996: 142)

The mapping of practice and reflection is non-linear: a stop–start navigation from work to work to theoretical text to work, and so on. We might describe the insights derived from studio encounters with theory as action-looking. In this case, using digital video acted as an investigative device to

interrogate the nature of the digital frame, its perilous virtual existence, its elusiveness, its limitations in the face of analogue measures of time and space like film frames and sundials and its status as cinematic time and not ‘durée’. Paradoxically, the new frames capturing the space between these not-really-existing digital frames through re-filming, seem to offer a space where time has slipped away to reveal an affective dimension.

The visible traces caught in these in-between frames *resemble* the marks made through painterly seeing. This, in turn, leads to problems of *resemblance* and *representation*. Accepting these frames as indexical of an encounter rather than a pro-filmic event seems to indicate the possibility of Benjaminian ‘unconscious optics’ at work in their selection and reconstruction in the work. Victor Burgin’s ‘remembered film’ and the idea of the ‘sequence-image’ offer insights drawn from psychoanalysis concerning the operations of memory and desire in the process of sifting through footage to work with certain sequences or frames.

In my most recent work, it has been the ‘fluid semiotics of affect’ (Kennedy 2000: 135) and the idea of ‘sensation’ from the work of Deleuze and Guattari that has been most valuable in understanding how this *resemblance* to ‘painterliness’ may work. I consider the spaces between frames as a kind of analogue of visual perception that slips and slides – as mobile as our actual lived vision like a ‘painterly’ Bacon or Auerbach picture where lines and colours germinate into forms under our temporal scrutiny. This is happening in the moment, right now, as we look.

The three video pieces considered in this article have been made by experimenting with digital video frames. Engagements with theoretical material from Benjamin, Burgin and Deleuze have shed light on the process of making these works. Taken together, these ‘encounters’ offer insights into ‘affect’ in painting, and how this relates to movement. The day-to-day process of working with digital frames, deconstructing and reconstructing elements of films in my studio practice, has helped me to grasp how the spatialization of time, as recorded in the visible traces of movement in painterly surfaces together with the mobile gaze, may in part explain my experiences of altered consciousness and of temporal elasticity as a painter and as a spectator. Painting is an embodied and

performative practice and its temporal affects are formed through movement. By bringing experiences of painting together with the formal structures and viewing spaces of experimental moving image works, we find that the process of working with framed, measured and manipulated time in video sheds light on how a painterly painting holds memory in its surfaces through movement, gesture and materiality and how it *moves* the spectator.

Notes

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Figure 1: Painting from series: *Afterlife*, 2009, 8" × 10", oil on canvas, worked from still from *The Cruel Sea*, shown here with extracted video frame.

Figure 2: *Hold*, 2007, two-screen video installation; dimensions variable, originally shown at the APT Gallery in London in 2007.

Figure 3: *An Occulting Light*, Two-screen video, seven-looped sequences to 15 minutes, originally shown at the APT Gallery in 2007.

Figure 4: *An Occulting Light*, two-screen video, seven-looped sequences to 15 minutes, originally shown at the APT Gallery in 2007.

Figure 5: *Lighter Darker*, 2008, five-screen site-specific video work, originally shown in 'Maybe in the Sky' at World Museum Liverpool.

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